

REDMOND PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

February 16, 2005

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chairperson Snodgrass, Commissioners Allen, Dunn, McCarthy, Parnell, Petitpas, Querry

STAFF PRESENT: Terry Marpert, Terry Shirk, Lori Peckol, Redmond Planning Department; Arthur Sullivan, A Regional Coalition for Housing (ARCH)

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m. by Chair Snodgrass in the Public Safety Building Council Chambers.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

APPROVAL OF MEETING SUMMARY

A. February 9, 2005

The meeting summary was approved by acclamation.

ITEMS FROM THE AUDIENCE – None

PUBLIC HEARING AND STUDY SESSION

Proposed RCDG Amendment
– Innovative Housing Pilot Program

Chair Snodgrass declared the public hearing open.

Mr. Jim Soules, president of The Cottage Company and developer of Redmond's first cottage project, said his company is also developing housing in Kirkland under their new innovative housing code. He suggested that Redmond should consider having two submittal dates each year, rather than focusing on the first five that come in. That is the approach taken by Kirkland; they also made a decision within 30 days. Redmond should be clearer with regard to the "beauty contest" submittal; it should call for conceptual designs, renderings and site plans. That is especially important in those instances where a developer does not own the property. Shoreline was the first city to adopt a code allowing cottage housing. Their code, however, was not prescriptive enough, and only the first of the three projects developed to date was deemed satisfactory, and steps are being taken to revise the code. Among other things, they are considering a larger minimum lot size to allow for sufficient wiggle room to be creative. The proposal for

Redmond to allow staff to have flexibility with regard to design control should work well. Consideration should be given to establishing minimum size projects; developments with fewer than four units are difficult to accomplish, and the amount of administrative management needed is about the same as for projects with eight or twelve units. All bonuses should be tied to something related to the size of the units similar to the approach used in Kirkland. There is an incredible demand in the market for different types of housing.

Continuing, Mr. Soules said Shoreline determined its bonus based on the underlying zoning, which was six units per acre. However, Shoreline has a minimum lot size of 7200 square feet, which does not permit six units per acre. The bonus does not work. Kirkland requires applicants as part of the “beauty contest” to show how a property could be developed under the conventional zoning. Their density bonus is based on the number of units that can be achieved under the conventional zoning, not on some arbitrary number of units per acre.

Scale will be the key to success. The results have not been good in all cases where someone has tried to build big houses on small lots. The character of the developments as viewed from the public street should be single family. Trip generation is an issue that must be addressed. Absent an actual study, the best that traffic engineers can do is base trip generation for cottage developments on townhouse developments, which is usually about 80 percent of what is generated by single family. With regard to utilities, he was generally concerned that utilities and public works regulations designed for single-family homes do not related well to this type of development.

Commissioner Parnell asked if Redmond could benefit from soliciting ideas from both out of state and out of country developers. Mr. Soules said development tends to be regional in nature. The built-green community should at the very least be given notice of the pilot program.

Commissioner Parnell asked if a size limit should be established. Mr. Soules pointed out that Redmond already has a size limit in the cottage code. He said he could see tougher height restrictions considered for cottages. Until the mid 70s the average home was 1500 square feet; for some reason the market thinks 2500 square feet should be the norm. There is a very big market for small homes.

The cottage project in Redmond has 12 units on a fairly small site, with impervious surfaces taking up half the land area of a standard subdivision. The homeowners are having to pay double what an average single family home pays because no credit is being allowed for the open space that resulted from clustering the homes. Efforts are under way to convince the city to make a change, especially where the size of the units is regulated.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Dunn, Mr. Soules said his preference would be to develop a project with a variety of housing sizes. What happened with the cottage project was all the buyers were one- and two-person households; there were no

families with children. In many ways the pilot program is far more attractive than the cottage development was. With respect to community dynamics and interaction of the residents, he added that for projects with 12 or more units there is a tendency among some to withdraw and assume others in the association will run things. Accordingly, 12-unit projects are ideal, 24 if done in two clusters of 12 each.

Mr. Soules stressed the importance of including community buildings in clustered projects.

Commissioner Dunn asked what underlying zoning will work best for the project mix, and Mr. Soules said R-4 through R-8 works very well. He added that the two times bonus density is too generous for 1500 to 1900 square foot homes; fifty percent is more than enough.

Commissioner Petitpas asked if there are problems associated with the impact fees. Mr. Soules said when the cottage project was developed, the full price of impact fees was paid for each unit as if they were 12 single family homes. Kirkland levies its impact fees for cottage developments at the multifamily development rates.

Mr. Curt Bateman, 13315 175th Avenue NE, voiced his support for analyzing the sewer and water hookups and allowing credits for smaller units. He said if the five projects per year equate to approved projects, there will be no need for a “beauty contest”. He encouraged the Commission not to go down that road and to leave the issue wide open.

Chair Snodgrass said his reading of the ordinance is that there would be five projects total, not five per year. Senior Planner Terry Shirk said the intent is to approve up to five per year, which is not to say that the city will not accept more than five.

With regard to enforcement of trip generation restrictions, Mr. Bateman suggested that it is not necessarily enforceable. He added that it is much ado about nothing given that similar projects in the area have not historically generated any complaints. Staff should be allowed flexibility in reviewing the design; there should not be an arbitrary restriction imposed.

Mr. Pedro Castro, 10515 171st Avenue NE, said he is the architect working with Mr. Bateman and his team. He encouraged the Commission to consider incentives for getting things approved in a timely manner. There is a huge demand for housing, and timely approvals can keep projects on schedule and moving forward.

Commissioner McCarthy asked what amount of time can be considered timely in getting a project approved. Mr. Castro suggested that the city should be able to issue a building permit in four weeks or less instead of six weeks or more. The review of projects involves many different city departments, and some mechanism should be found to allow each to work parallel to the others.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Parnell, Mr. Castrol allowed that no rule fits every situation. However, in Redmond the process to get a permit to reface a building is the same process that must be followed to construct the entire building in the first place. There must be some way to streamline that. The innovation will have to flow from the city staff. The development community needs both a timely turnaround and a predictable process.

Mr. Soules said one of the interesting things about constructing the Kirkland project was that once The Cottage Company had been chosen staff sat down with the company to work out all the problems. When it came time to submit the Type II application, all the ducks were lined up and approval was issued in 90 days. Kirkland issues building permits within ten days when there is a third party review, which the developers must pay for; their normal process requires up to four months for a home permit.

With no additional persons wishing to address the Commission, Chair Snodgrass declared the public hearing closed. He allowed that written materials would still be accepted.

With regard to the issue of the “beauty contest”, there was consensus to put the item on the issues list for further discussion.

It was agreed that because unit size limits are already in place, the matter does not need to be discussed further.

There was consensus to add to the issues list the matter of relating the density bonus to the size of the property and how the bonus should be calculated.

Chair Snodgrass proposed that the single family character issue is adequately covered by the reference to the design standards. The other Commissioners concurred.

There was agreement to add the topic of trip generation to the issues list, as well as treating the developments as multifamily when it comes to sewer and water connections, and offering a mix of unit sizes within each development.

The issue of whether or not to market the project outside the local region was added to the list for additional discussion, as was the concept of including a community building in such projects.

Commissioner Parnell proposed discussing further encouraging broadband, wi-fi and other services not currently offered in the neighborhood.

There was agreement to add to the issues list the minimum and maximum number of units in a cluster. There was also concurrence to discuss further how to assure timely project review and approval decisions.

Commissioner Dunn asked to have parking added to the issues list.

Turning to the issue of the review panel representation, Commissioner Querry noted that staff made a minor revision to the wording of the proposal to allow the Mayor to appoint someone where there are no CAC or neighborhood representatives present. It was agreed that in order to assure not slowing down the process, where there is no CAC the Mayor should appoint two members of the Planning Commission.

Commissioner Dunn proposed that where the Commission is involved at the higher level of approving a concept, the Commission should not be involved again in the detailed meetings focused on a submittal.

Commissioner Petitpas asked who reviews the submittals in Kirkland. Mr. Soules ((off mike response)) ... made by the Planning Commission, not a panel. It is done in a public format.

A Regional Coalition for Housing Director Arthur Sullivan asked if those who are selected in the first step have their projects reviewed a second time by the same group. Mr. Soules said the process then moves directly to the Type II permit process, which requires City Council approval. The neighborhood meeting occurred between the “beauty contest” and the formal application.

Commissioner Parnell thought it would be good for the Commission to be involved in at least the first set of reviews, whether formally or informally, so that tweaks can be proposed to the process as needed. Chair Snodgrass disagreed. He said he likes the proposal for a panel made up of two members of the Design Review Board, one or two members from the Commission, and someone from the Technical Committee. The Commission simply is not qualified to make decisions of that type.

Commissioner Querry asked for comments regarding process. Chair Snodgrass said he generally agrees with the process as proposed, which he said as he understood it would occur only once annually. Ms. Shirk said there has been some discussion about making the review ongoing to allow for evaluation of exceptional projects that may be submitted. The general intent is to develop a means by which innovative development projects can be reviewed, to allow consideration of housing types that have not previously been considered. Where deemed appropriate, the regulations will be updated to reflect the innovative concepts.

Mr. Sullivan said the original intent of Kirkland was to move forward with a single project. They ended up choosing two projects, but they were both in the same neighborhood, so they concluded that there should be a second round. He suggested that having a single deadline annually could generate interest and a good response.

Chair Snodgrass commented that where all applications are due at a set time, there is ample opportunity to compare the submittals and select the best from among them; that is not the case where applications can be submitted at any time of the year. On the other hand, if after the submittal period closes a property that would be perfect for an innovative design comes on the market, a developer would likely not want to wait for

another year. Ms. Shirk said the ordinance gives the Council the ability to authorize other projects. The ordinance could be adjusted to establish a submittal date quarterly. If the ordinance retained its limit of only five projects per year, those most interested would likely want their projects included in the first round each year.

Chair Snodgrass indicated support for allowing proposals to be submitted at any time of the year. Commissioner Allen favored having two submittal dates annually, the approach used in Kirkland.

Commissioner McCarthy asked how quickly a permit decision could be made after the submittal date. Ms. Shirk said it is theoretically possible that permits could be issued within two months. However, the process as envisioned involves an initial review by the panel, followed by a neighborhood meeting and a second review by the panel, before final authorization to proceed is given. From the deadline date, it would be reasonable to have a recommendation to proceed from the review panel within four or five weeks. It takes about three weeks to schedule a neighborhood meeting, then another couple of weeks for the review panel to meet the second time. Commissioner McCarthy said that means anyone submitting a proposal would not know for three months whether or not their project has been approved or rejected.

Commissioner McCarthy offered his support for having a couple of known submittal dates annually. It would be even better to limit the number of approved projects from any given submittal process to only three; if the panel were to conclude that five projects submitted at once all merit going forward, the city may not be able to deliver.

Mr. Sullivan pointed out that between the time the project submitted by Mr. Soules to Kirkland was approved and the time when the design work was ready for the review under the permitting process was a full year.

Mr. Soules said what the development community needs is a fairly short period of time between submittal and consideration by the panel review. That allows the developer time to revise the project as necessary before meeting with the neighborhood. Once the neighborhood meeting has gone through, it will take two to four months of engineering and design time just to get an application ready for submittal. Following that, an additional four or five months is needed to get the entitlement. From the time of the entitlement to final building permits it can take another four or five months. He suggested that having three or four submittal deadlines per year would be better than having only one or two.

Commissioner Dunn showed her favor for two submittal dates per year, provided the Council is allowed the ability to entertain exceptional projects outside the established submittal dates. She said she really likes the notion of having the neighborhood all come together to review the project and become educated about innovative housing. The competitiveness associated with the process will also spur the development community on to even more creativity. It should be possible to reduce the time between submittal

and authorization to move ahead to more detailed drawings, either by not having the panel meet a second time, or by having the neighborhood meeting up front.

Commissioner Parnell said he would like to see the awarding of project approvals occur in conjunction with a public event such as Derby Days. He agreed with Commissioner Dunn that the process as outlined includes some redundancy that could be eliminated. There should be only one review panel review, but three or four submittal deadlines each year.

Commissioner Querry supported the concept of having three submittal deadlines, and having just one review by the panel instead of two.

There was straw vote approval for having two deadlines annually, and for allowing the Council to have authority to approve additional projects throughout the year. There was also agreement that the panel review meetings should be open to the public and broadly noticed.

Commissioner McCarthy said he would like to see the panel meet to discuss the neighborhood meeting input no later than one week following the neighborhood meeting. Ms. Shirk said she could not guarantee a schedule that tight.

Mr. Bateman said he favors shortening the process to the extent possible but urged the Commission to retain the second review by the panel. It always is better to have the full support of the neighborhood than to have a shorter process.

Mr. Soules said under the Kirkland approach the filing deadline is on a Friday. On the following Monday the city sends out notice to the public that applications have been received under the innovative housing code, and the public has three weeks to visit City Hall and review the submittals prior to the neighborhood meeting. It is a very solid public process. One way to shorten the process would be to eliminate the second panel review but to require staff to consult with the panel after the formal application is submitted.

It was agreed that Commissioner Querry should work with staff offline to flush out some of the options and ideas that have been brought to the table. The Commissioners were asked to provide staff with their issues rankings as soon as possible.

****BREAK****

STUDY SESSION

Transportation Master Plan

Principle Planner Terry Marpert provided the Commissioners with a schedule showing the various Council, Commission and public meetings for review of the transportation master plan. He noted that both the community open house and public hearing before the

Commission are scheduled for March 9, though not at the same time of day. The ultimate goal is to have a recommendation before the Council by the end of March and a Council decision by the end of May.

Chair Snodgrass said he could see no reason to formally review Chapters 1, 2 and 3 given that they are simply recitations and statements of fact and existing policies.

Commissioner Parnell suggested that each chapter should be subjected to four specific questions: 1) Are the project priorities driven by concurrency rather than development? 2) Does the chapter enforce multimodal buildout? 3) Do the policies take community character into account? and 4) Does the chapter contribute to the observation of real travel demand needs rather than LOS measurements?

Chair Snodgrass reminded the Commissioners that the document was prepared by experts to whom the city paid a lot of money. He suggested focusing on whether the document is consistent with the established vision and goals, and the reasonableness of the implemented provisions. He said he would like to hear from the Commissioners whether or not there needs to be a review of the projects to be built out over the next six years.

Commissioner Querry responded that if the Commission is going to have a discussion concerning concurrency, there will have to be some focus given to the list of projects necessary to attain concurrency.

Chair Snodgrass noted that in Chapter 6 there is a list of 50 or 60 projects set forth that staff has concluded meet the land use projections for 2022. Senior Engineer Kurt Seeman said staff believes the projects support the ideas set out in the plan and are within the estimated budget. Appendix A-1 includes a list of additional projects that are needed to meet the ultimate build out of the city envisioned by the Comprehensive Plan.

Commissioner Petitpas asked what the Commission can contribute to the process by discussing the projects on the list. Commissioner Querry proposed that if staff were to provide the Commission with a reflection of the reasoning that led to the choosing of the projects on the list, a full discussion of the projects on the list would be obviated.

Chair Snodgrass said that information will be very useful. He allowed that staff and not the Commission has the expertise to determine which projects are most important for maintaining concurrency and addressing the traffic issues through 2022 with the available dollars. If the Commission accepts the reasoning of staff, then the impact fee issue will be closed as well given that the plan is based on the current level of impact fees revenues.

Mr. Seeman suggested that there should be a presentation on the modeling used and how staff reached the conclusions they did with regard to which projects should be on the list. He stressed that the plan as proposed is not aimed at relieving all congestion in the city. Even if all of the projects are constructed, there will be more congestion in the future. The plan is about transportation choices and funding various modes of travel.

Commissioner Dunn said her first concern is to make sure the projects on the list are adequate to meet the concurrency requirements. Beyond that the Commission should debate whether or not the plan should go even further.

Chair Snodgrass agreed. He said he does not yet know what the honest and candid opinion of staff is with regard to the transportation master plan.

Commissioner Dunn stressed the importance of implementing the vision across all of the chapters in the document plan.

Chair Snodgrass said it will be necessary to work through each chapter individually. The only question is whether that should be done first or if the more global issues should be tackled first.

Commissioner Allen said her approach has been to make sure the content of the chapters is consistent with the policies of the Transportation Element. As a group, the Commission should work through the document chapter by chapter first.

There was consensus to review each chapter individually first, develop a list of major themes and then discuss those to make sure the transportation master plan implements the vision of the Transportation Element that has already been adopted. There was also agreement that the Commission should review the projects called out in the plan with an eye on determining whether or not they support the planned land use through 2022.

Commissioner Query stressed the need to avoid getting hung up on funding in the first look at the project list. She asked if they are shown in priority order. Mr. Seeman said they are prioritized for the first three years, and to a lesser degree for the first six years. Beyond that the prioritization is a bit more fuzzy. He said he will prepare materials for a discussion on how the project list was generated by staff.

It was agreed to extend the meeting beyond 10:00 p.m. for a couple of minutes.

REPORTS

Mr. Marpert reminded the Commissioners of the workshop coming up on March 4 and 5.

SCHEDULING/TOPICS FOR NEXT MEETING(S)

ADJOURN

Chair Snodgrass adjourned the meeting at 10:04 p.m.

Minutes Approved On:

Recording Secretary